

How can social psychology help us better understand political orientations?

Craig Harper

At the recent 30th Annual PsyPAG Conference in Glasgow, I was fortunate enough to be awarded the organisation's Rising Researcher Award. As part of this award, I was invited to present work that myself and colleagues have been doing at the University of Lincoln on the social psychology of social and political orientations. In this article, I review some of the key theories currently used in this area, before describing some data that we've collected prior to the 2015 British General Election. I then conclude the article by outlining some potential avenues for further research.

SINCE R.D. LAING (1960) coined the phrase 'ontological insecurity' in the mid-20th century, various literatures have sought to develop this concept in a way that can be applicable to social cognition. Defined broadly as the feeling attached to the stability (or lack thereof) that people perceive in both their self-identity and their surrounding environments (Giddens, 1990), ontological insecurity has been linked to a range of issues – most notably mental ill health (Laing, 1960) and a hardening of social attitudes (Young, 1999).

According to Young (1999), 'the precariousness of human existence and the need for a viable Umwelt necessitates a whole series of defensive mechanisms' (p.97), with one such mechanism proposed to be a (re-)hardening of social values and attitudes. In Jonathan Haidt's TED talk, he exemplified this through a reference to Hieronymus Bosch's triptych, 'The Garden of Earthly Delights' (Figure 1). In this painting, Bosch provides a schematic that is akin to social decay, based on liberalisation and a lowering of Government control (Bosch painted this as God). Haidt contended that this schematic can act as a metaphor for why we revert to more conservative outlooks following a period of liberalisation.

Existing theories within the social psychological literature

Social psychological inquiry into the roots of political orientations has traditionally been based around the notion that these ideological stances help to address particular psychological needs. Moral Foundations Theory (MFT; Haidt & Graham, 2007), for example, asserts that political identities are driven largely by the extent to which people subscribe to different moral domains, each of which describes a particular set of political values. Six of these moral domains have been identified (Haidt, 2012):

1. *Care*: looking after vulnerable people or groups.
2. *Fairness*: support for the fair distribution of social resources.
3. *Loyalty*: pride in one's group and national identity.
4. *Authority*: respect for established social hierarchies.
5. *Sanctity*: a drive to avoid exposure to socially-taboo or harmful behaviours.
6. *Liberty*: a desire for economic and/or lifestyle freedom from Government interference.

Haidt and colleagues have, over several years, examined the moral profiles of self-identified Liberals, Conservatives, and Libertarians from a number of societies (e.g. the US, UK, Japan, India) through data

Figure 1: Bosch's 'The Garden of Earthly Delights'
(from: www.hieronymous-bosch.org).



collected using a publicly-available research website, and found significant differences in the endorsement of these moral foundations between ideological groups. Liberals, for instance, strongly endorse statements derived from the care domain, followed by the fairness domain (conceptualised by Liberals as equality of outcomes), and the (lifestyle) liberty domain, but typically reject items from the other domains. By comparison, Conservatives endorse all moral domains equally highly, whilst Libertarians reject all of the moral domains, with the exception of economic and lifestyle liberty. According to Haidt's group, these differences are fundamental when trying to

explain the increasingly polarised nature of American politics.

Other theories of worldview defence have also sought to explain the impact of the need for a clear and coherent perception of the social world on social and political attitudes. Terror Management Theory (TMT; Greenberg, Pyszczynski & Solomon, 1986) offers an empirically-tested theoretical paradigm for understanding why attitudes toward social issues may become hardened in the face of perceived external threats, such as political criticism, and immigration. According to TMT, having a strong cultural worldview acts as an emotional buffer when contemplating mortality by providing a sense

of purpose to a time-limited lifespan. TMT studies artificially induce mortality salience in order to examine the effects of this on views about potentially worldview-threatening issues. Studies have found that mortality salience contributes to the expression of more conservative and insular attitudes about a range of political topics, such as support for the ruling Government (Landau et al., 2004), patriotism (Pyszczynski et al., 2006), military action against foreign enemies (Motyl, Hart & Pyszczynski, 2009), and the endorsement of enhanced interrogation (torture) techniques (Luke & Hartwig, 2014). In addition to these 'nation-strengthening' effects, experimentally increasing mortality salience, has also been associated with prejudicial judgements of immigrants (Motyl et al., 2011), and punitive responses to lawbreakers (Jost et al., 2003).

Further, System Justification Theory (SJT; Jost & Banaji, 1994) asserts that people not only require a clear and consistent worldview, but also need to see this worldview, and its central social structures and hierarchies, as being fair and just. SJT studies examine this phenomenon by manipulating levels of 'system threat' (typically through the presentation of a mock criticism, advocated by an outsider in the form of a news story or similar vignette) in relation to the participants' home culture (e.g. Kay, Jost & Young, 2005). Studies have repeatedly found that participants in high system threat conditions are motivated to endorse the prevailing social status quo, and advocate that social structures and hierarchies are fair, even if this means derogating social victims and attributing blame to those at the bottom of the societal hierarchy for the positions in which they find themselves (Kay et al., 2005).

Synthesising sociological and psychological work, van Marle and Maruna (2010) suggested that linking the sociological concept of 'ontological insecurity' with an empirical approach like TMT could provide a more valid context to TMT theorists trying to explain the social significance of their lab-

based findings, whilst simultaneously providing experimental support for the sociological literature on ontological insecurity. Van Marle and Maruna (2010) cited van den Bos et al.'s (2005) work on 'uncertainty reduction', which suggested that 'mortality salience' may be replaceable by other free-floating existential anxieties (through, for example, societal inequality) and achieve the same effects in relation to social and political attitudes.

More recently, Malka et al. (2014) examined needs for security and certainty (NSC) in relation to social and economic conservatism in a large sample of over 73,000 participants from over 50 countries. What they reported was a more nuanced relationship between NSC and conservatism than would have been expected using these previous theories. Whilst participants who scored highly in relation to NSC (measured using selected items from the World Values Survey) expressed more conservative attitudes in relation to social issues (e.g. an opposition to homosexuality, abortion, immigration, and support for the harsh punishment of criminals), these same participants were typically more left-leaning with regards to economic policies (e.g. support for welfare programmes, and an opposition to income inequality). This effect, however, was only present within participants low on a measure of political engagement. Highly politically engaged participants in Malka et al.'s (2014) study who also scored highly in relation to NSC expressed the expected trend, and supported both culturally and economically conservative policies. With these findings in mind, it is important to consider political ideology as a multifaceted phenomenon.

What have we done?

The studies described above all used different measures to examine each of the pivotal variables involved in this area. With no standardised measures of ontological insecurity currently available within either the sociological or psychological literatures,

we sought to address this gap in the lead-up to the 2015 UK General Election.

My supervisor (Professor Todd Hogue) and I collaborated with a local news organisation, *The Lincolnite*, to collect data on voting intentions before the Election last May. We drafted a 25-item measure of ontological insecurity, based on factors that were outlined in the sociological literature. Data were collected from 550 participants, and we were able to confirm the four-factor structure of an 18-item, psychometrically reliable Ontological Insecurity Scale (OIS), which was differentially associated with conservative and liberal attitudes.

High scores on the 'Social Change' factor of the OIS were associated with conservative social and political attitudes, whilst participants with high scores on the 'Societal Inequality' OIS factor were more likely to endorse liberal attitudes (Figure 2).

We found no significant differences in relation to ontological insecurity scores between the supporters of specific political parties, with the exception of UKIP, whose voters scored significantly higher on the OIS than participants supporting any other party. However, when divided into 'high' and 'low' (based on their scores on the OIS), participants who expressed supporting either the Conservatives or Labour differed significantly in relation to their social and political values. In both cases, participants scoring higher on the OIS scores expressed more conservative sentiments (lower scores) on the political attitudes questionnaire. This trend was also observed among 'Undecided' voters, indicating the potential impact of communication styles (in either increasing or decreasing OIS-relevant sentiments) on voting behaviour and electoral outcomes. Figure 3 graphically shows these differences.

Figure 2: The relationship between OIS scores and social and political attitudes.

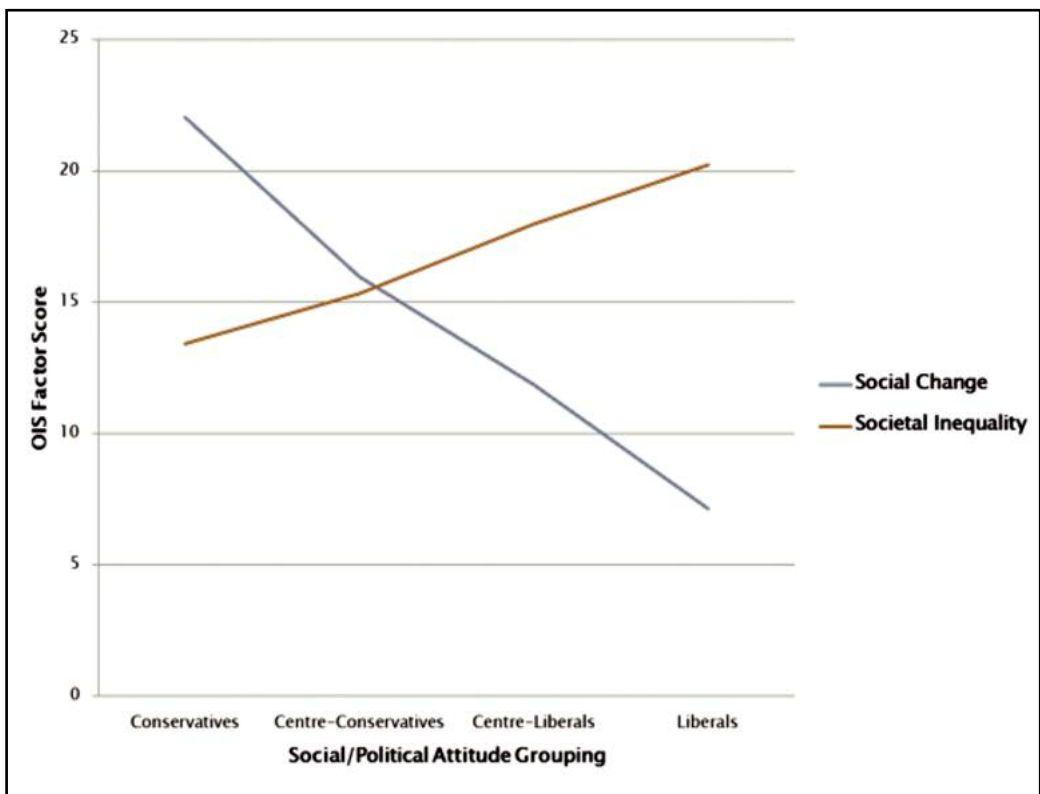
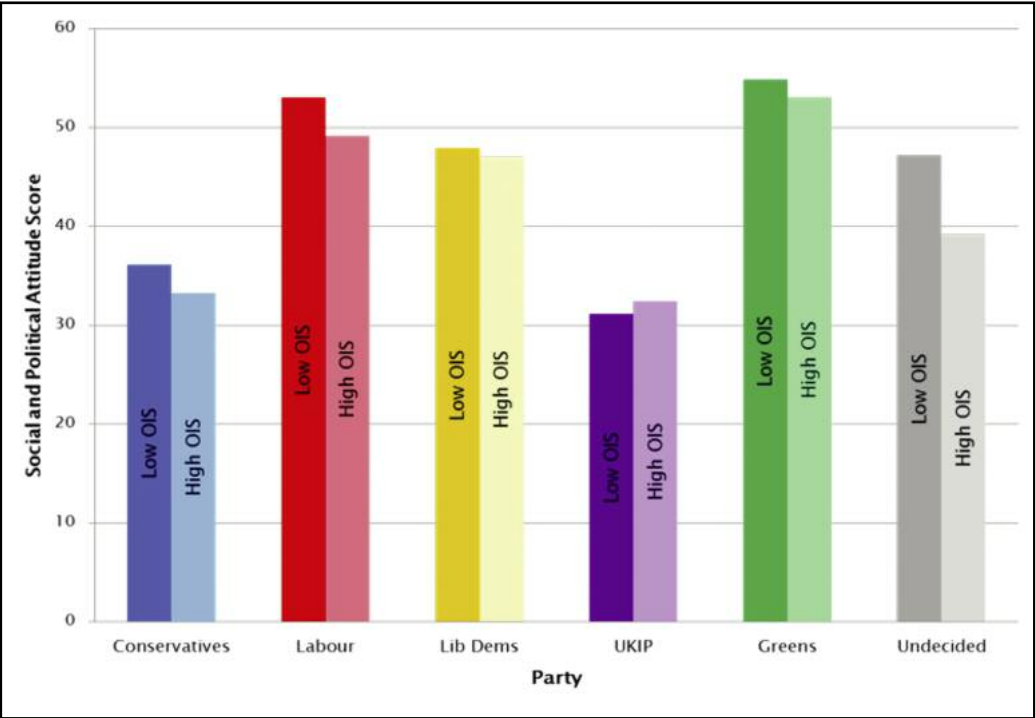


Figure 3: Social and political attitudes of party supporters, by OIS score grouping.



We are currently preparing two papers based on this data, each of which outline the development and validation of the measurement tools used. We hope to have these ready for journal submission prior to the end of this year.

Where next?

There are a number of potential avenues for further research that are open on the basis of these data, which predominantly fall into three areas: partisanship, political communication, and implicit processing styles based on OIS scores.

British-based research into the demonisation and partisanship hypotheses made by Haidt’s team in the US could be conducted in conjunction with an analysis of the role of ontological insecurity levels in forming judgements about specific policy proposals. Studies examining this interaction could use labelled and label-free policy suggestions,

with a key hypothesis being that if partisanship guides policy support, judgements would be dependent upon the party to which they were labelled as belonging to, regardless of OIS scores. However, if ontological insecurity has an impact on policy support, it would be expected that label-free conservative policies would receive more support from those scoring high on the OIS, independent of participants’ party affiliations.

Another potentially fruitful area of research is in political communication. For example, could it be that people who are ontologically insecure attend and respond more to affect-based information than those scoring lower on the OIS? Vignette studies could be conducted here, with a possible hypothesis being that affectively-laden vignettes would have more of an influence on the social judgements of those scoring high on the OIS than those scoring low.

Finally, it may be possible to use indirect methodologies (e.g. implicit association tests, or mousetracking) to assess the processing styles of high/low OIS scorers in relation to contentious social issues, such as criminal justice, immigration, and welfare. Using this paradigm, it would be expected that differences in the implicit processing of information about these issues would be detectable in people with high or low scores on the key OIS factors of 'Social Change' and 'Societal Inequality'.

Conclusions

From the data that we have collected, ontological insecurity seems to have the potential to be pivotal in political behaviour. The social and political attitudes of undecided

voters in our sample varied significantly as a function of ontological insecurity scores, and with up to a third of voters still being undecided in the final week of election campaigns, how political parties capitalise on (or alleviate) levels of ontological insecurity could play a major role in electoral outcomes. By studying these processes experimentally, it may be possible for psychologists to become engaged within the political process to a greater extent than seen before, and advise politicians on how to maximise their potential for electoral success.

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'Let your conscience be your guide': Using Moral Foundations Theory to further understanding of moral intuitions

Amrita Ahluwalia

Moral Foundation Theory (MFT) was coined by a group of social and cultural psychologists. This theory proposes that several innate sets of moral concerns or 'foundations' underpin moral judgment. Theoretically, MFT posits that moral judgments tend to be intuitive and affective. Nonetheless, despite this commitment to intuitionism, most MFT research is conducted using self-report measures. Where work has examined intuitive processes, this tends to explore foundations in isolation and, therefore, does not provide an understanding of how an individual's moral intuitions relate to one another and to their deliberated moral judgements. MFT makes an important contribution to social psychology by seeking to explain the diversity of moral beliefs and values found across people and cultures. However, there are still significant gaps in MFT research. This paper outlines the need to develop ways of mapping moral intuitions within the context of MFT.

MAKING MORAL DECISIONS is an important part of what it is to be human and people have been pondering moral questions for centuries. However, Western traditions have tended to place importance on the role of rational processes in moral judgments, and until fairly recently, so did psychologists. But these approaches ignore the role of moral intuitions. Over the past decade, moral psychology has begun to investigate automatic bases of moral judgment, moving away from tendencies to view morality as solely the result of reasoning. This growing field suggests that moral judgments are affected by manipulations outside of conscious awareness or that would not be endorsed as the causes of judgments. Resultantly, in more recent years some social psychologists have proposed theories which suggest that most moral judgments tend to be the result of quick intuitive and affective processes rather than rational ones. Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) presents as one such example.

Drawing from evolutionary and cultural psychology, MFT provides a social psycholog-

ical framework to account for why moral beliefs vary so much across individuals and cultures (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). MFT explains this divergence by suggesting that people are born with innate sets of moral values that are shaped by their cultural context, such that some values become more important than others over time. These values are referred to as 'moral foundations'. In contrast to other conceptions of morality, MFT appreciates the importance of social learning and proposes that moral systems should be defined as sets of values that bind communities and make social life possible (Graham & Haidt, 2010; Haidt & Kesebir, 2010).

MFT contrasts traditional explorations of moral judgment that focus on justice and harm, and consign concerns around things like purity and patriotism to a non-moral sphere. MFT draws on evolutionary psychology to suggest that foundations are sets of related adaptive modules that have evolved in response to recurrent social challenges (Graham et al., 2012). Foundations thus provide an innate structure that constrains the moralities that can be formed

across cultures. At present there is good evidence for five foundations. These are outlined in Table 1, along with related adaptive problems and intuitive responses (adapted from Graham et al., 2012).

Theoretically, MFT is committed to the following four claims: *nativism* – there is an innate and universal ‘first draft’ of morality (Graham et al., 2012) prepared to learn social values and norms; *cultural learning* – this ‘first draft’ results in a hardwired aptitude for learning and can, therefore, be edited by cultural context (Graham et al., 2012; Haidt & Joseph, 2004); *intuitionism* – moral judgments tend to occur as a result of automatic and non-conscious intuitions, rather than by explicit and deliberative reasoning (Haidt & Joseph, 2004); and *pluralism* – there are multiple moral foundations (Graham et al., 2011).

Whilst a major objective of MFT has been to provide an account of moral diversity across individuals and cultures, it was initially developed to explore moral conflict between differing political ideologies (Graham, Haidt & Nosek, 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt et al., 2009). MFT predicts that the intractability of moral disputes associated with liberal/conservative divides can be explained by differences in patterns of moral foundations, where liberals and conservatives prioritise contrasting sets of values (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Koleva et al., 2012). Multiple studies show that liberals place greater emphasis on *Care* and *Fairness*, also referred to as *individuating* foundations, while conservatives place greater emphasis

than liberals on *Loyalty*, *Authority*, and *Sanctity*, the *binding* foundations (Graham et al., 2009, 2011; Nilsson & Erlandsson, 2015). For example, in debates about gay marriage, liberals are unlikely to encounter *Care* or *Fairness* violations and so do not have moral objections, while conservatives perceive violations of *Loyalty* (outsiders infiltrating wholesome families and communities), *Authority* (disrespect for tradition and traditional family life), and *Sanctity* (as disgusting or unnatural). MFT can, therefore, go some way to explaining attitudes towards policy issues. For example, Koleva et al. (2012) found that self-rated endorsements of moral foundations predicted moral attitudes and disapproval across 20 controversial topics (e.g. abortion, death penalty, gay marriage, etc.), even after controlling for political ideology. Furthermore, Day et al. (2014) found that relevant foundation-related framing bolstered political attitudes in both conservatives and liberals. Findings such as these suggest that MFT provides a useful empirical framework for mapping moral diversity.

However, the empirical work outlined thus far has relied on self-report measures of moral foundations, specifically the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (Graham et al., 2011), to map individual moral domains and explore links to political ideology. This begs the question: If intuitionism is a core tenet of MFT, why rely on self-report for identifying participants’ moral mappings?

As an intuitionist theory, research on intuitive foundation-related moral judge-

Table 1: Moral Foundations and related adaptive challenges and intuitive responses.

<i>Foundation</i>	<i>Adaptive Challenge</i>	<i>Intuitive Responses</i>
Care/Harm	Protecting offspring	Compassion, anger at perpetrator
Authority/Subversion	Forming beneficial relationships	Respect, fear
Fairness/Cheating	Gaining reciprocal benefits	Anger, gratitude, guilt
Sanctity/Degradation	Avoiding disease	Disgust
Loyalty/Betrayal	Forming cohesive coalitions	Group pride, anger at traitors

ment provides important evidence for MFT. There is a growing body of evidence in this area. For instance, Schnall et al. (2008) showed that incidental disgust (intuitive response associated with *Sanctity*) increased the harshness of participants' moral judgments when they exposed to disgust-inducing stimuli and manipulations. In addition, differences in disgust sensitivity have been shown to predict intuitive negativity towards gay people, as measured by an Implicit Association Test and by intentionality assessments (Inbar et al., 2009). Furthermore, a number of studies have found support for ideological effects with regard to implicit processing. For example, Helzer and Pizarro (2011) found links between political conservatism and disgust. Participants reported more conservative political orientations in the presence of visual reminders of physical purity (a hand sanitiser or hand-washing sign) were more likely to report conservative orientations and made harsher judgements regarding sexual violations. Findings like this indicate that manipulations of implicit foundation-related triggers can influence conscious decision-making.

Nevertheless, research into moral intuitions remains severely limited for a number of reasons. First, although there is a growing field exploring intuitive processes for different foundation-related concerns, to date this work has focused on single foundations in isolation, mainly *Sanctity* (Graham et al., 2012; Helzer & Pizarro, 2011; Schnall et al., 2008), rather than how foundations relate to one another in an individual's moral domain. Second, existing studies investigating moral intuitions have tended to explore effects as mediated through political ideology (Graham, 2010; Helzer & Pizarro, 2011). However, relatively little is known about how intuitive foundation-related moral judgment compares to explicit decision-making as little research directly compares intuitive processing to self-reported endorsements of foundations.

There is presently a need in MFT research to adapt methodology to be able to examine participants' intuitive moral domain. Thus far, a number of methods have been used to bypass self-report to measure foundation-related intuitions more directly (Graham et al., 2012). These have included: evaluative priming – foundation-related word primes flashed before positive/negative adjective targets; effect misattribution – foundation-related image primes flashed before neutral character targets; and financial trade-offs – quick responses to dichotomous questions about the amount of money required by participant for different foundation-violations. Nevertheless, these methodologies have yet to be adapted to develop an intuitive version of self-report scales and allow researchers to map the intensities of each foundation in a participant's intuitive moral domain and further a more holistic understanding of individuals' moral intuitions.

By proposing that a handful of innate, but variably developed, psychological structures are the foundations of human morality, MFT is able to account for why moral systems vary so much across different people and cultures, yet also show so many recurrent themes. MFT, therefore, provides a social psychological theory that can explain differences and similarities in moral decision-making, social attitudes, and political ideology. However, to date this work has been mainly limited to explicit moral reasoning and there is currently a dearth of research exploring how moral intuitions vary across individuals and cultures. Addressing this gap will be essential for future social and moral psychologists.

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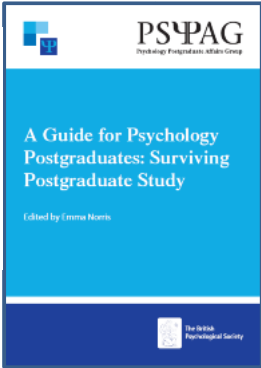
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**“The PsyPAG Guide for Psychology Postgraduates:
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Psychology as a STEM discipline

Dr Kimberley Hill

Psychology is a science that contributes greatly to a number of other Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. Unfortunately, it is not often recognised as a STEM discipline. This discussion paper considers psychology's membership as a STEM subject and the impact that it has had on our everyday lives. The author suggests that postgraduate students working on innovative, inter-disciplinary research can not only contribute to psychology's standing, but can also help to communicate the value of what psychologists do. Reflections from the author's experiences as a STEM Ambassador are also included, with reference to The University of Northampton's unique STEM Steering Group and STEM Champions programme.

PSYCHOLOGY is a science that contributes greatly to a number of other Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. Utilising scientific methods, psychologists create knowledge and solve real-world problems, with very practical implications. Unfortunately, psychology is not often recognised as a STEM discipline, or at least not consistently across different bodies (American Psychological Association, 2010; Sage, 2010).

As the scientific study of the mind and behaviour, the impact of psychology on society is very clear. From improving health and wellbeing, to understanding behaviour, psychology has an impact on most aspects of our everyday lives. For example, psychologists have been involved in designing British coins to aid the visually impaired (Bruce & Hellawell, 1988); safety aspects and the ergonomic layout of cockpits (Craik, 1940); and developing rear-facing pushchairs to assist parent-child interaction (Zeedyk, 2008). Beyond this, psychologists have helped to develop effective educational programmes, influence public health policy, inform legislation, create care systems, produce statistical techniques and shine a light on complex decision making.

Many real-world problems require collaboration among disciplines, which is something that psychology does very well. This is

important because forging connections with other disciplines and areas of research is one way which may enhance psychology's standing as a core STEM discipline. Research students play a key role in this, as they are increasingly working on complex, but innovative inter-disciplinary PhDs. For example, my own doctoral research brought together core ideas about social, cognitive, and health psychology by focusing on how an individual's relationship with their environment promotes or inhibits excessive alcohol consumption (Hill, 2014). Not only is alcohol misuse an area of public health concern, but these ideas potentially have implications for environmental design and how we understand complex social behaviours.

Over time, the public are becoming more receptive to the work that psychologists do, but these perceptions may not always be accurate. For example, if you were to ask a member of the public what a psychologist does, how closely would this description reflect what you do on a daily basis? The many reasons for these often inaccurate perceptions are beyond the scope of this article (see Klatzky, 2009), but it is our responsibility as psychologists to communicate the value of what we do to others and to consider the impact of our research. As Miller (1969) suggested, wherever possible, we must *give away* innovative methods, inter-

ventions or results which contribute to the public good.

There are a number of ways to do this, from publishing research to presenting at conferences. One way that I achieved this as a postgraduate student was by becoming a National STEM Ambassador. STEM Ambassadors support students, teachers and educational establishments by enriching and enhancing the psychology curriculum. For example, by going into schools and informing students about psychology-related careers, or helping to support teachers in lessons. Following training, I found myself helping to organise and taking part in a number of STEM events, including A-level research conferences, open days and Science Bazaar festivals.

Research students aiming for a career in academia are often told that a PhD is not enough, leaving many students trying to find ways to enhance their skills and stand out from other candidates. My own experiences as a STEM Ambassador were so much more than something I could add to my CV. As well as improving my own professional skills, experience and confidence, I really felt as if I was contributing to the futures of young people by enthusing and motivating them to find out more about psychology. For example, I fooled children and adults into thinking a rubber hand is their own hand; used magic tricks to teach students about awareness and attention; and explained how the visual system works using impossible objects and visual illusions.

Now as a lecturer at The University of Northampton, I have had the opportunity to build on the relationship between Psychology and STEM. Many universities have a faculty-based STEM programme, which potentially isolates psychology from other disciplines. Northampton has a unique inter-

disciplinary STEM Steering Group and its own STEM Champions programme. This brings together all areas of Science and ensures that psychology has a clear STEM membership. One of our most recent *Getting the Buzz from Science* days involved more than 80 Year 3 girls from 10 Northampton primary schools. For the first time at this event, an interactive psychology workshop appeared alongside other sessions on atomic science, biodiversity and engineering.

Being a psychologist requires individuals to be problem solvers. Therefore, it is up to us as psychologists to make sure that psychology has a clear STEM membership. For me, psychology is clearly a science, but it is important that we continue to communicate this and increase our involvement with other disciplines. Even if we do not have the opportunity to become a STEM Ambassador, we can still promote the impact and applications of our research to local communities and ensure that others can see the value of our work. Not only will this improve our own professional practice and employability skills, but it might even inspire others to forge a career in psychology.

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Information about the national STEM

Ambassador scheme can be found at:

<http://www.stemnet.org.uk/ambassadors/>

To find out more about STEM at

The University of Northampton please see:

<https://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/stem/>

or follow: @STEMatUN on Twitter.

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Conference review:

The British Psychological Society Developmental Section and Social Section Annual Conference 2015

Kiran Purewal & Chloe Tyler

9–11 September 2015, The Palace Hotel, Manchester.

For the first time, the British Psychological Society held a conference that joined together the Developmental and Social Sections. The event was held over three days (9–11 September) at The Palace Hotel, in the heart of Manchester. Researchers often fall into both the Developmental and Social Sections and can find it difficult to decide where to present their work. This joint annual conference provided the perfect opportunity for such researchers to present their work to audiences of both developmental and social psychologists. With four keynote speakers, a ‘meet the experts’ session, and a vast array of posters and talks, organisers of the event should be proud to have planned and hosted such a large-scale and well thought-out conference. This article discusses the range of talks and workshops presented at the event, along with two postgraduate researchers’ experiences of presenting their research for the first time.

SEPTEMBER 2015 saw the first-ever joint Developmental Section and Social Section Annual Conference, which was held in the beautiful and grand backdrop of The Palace Hotel in Manchester. And what better setting for this conference than the diverse and multicultural city of Manchester, with its vibrant gay village, edgy Northern Quarter, China Town, and sprawling universities?

The conference programme provided an extensive and well-provisioned list of presentations, workshops, symposia and posters from both sections, affording attendees the opportunity to reflect on research from psychologists from across the UK and overseas.

Some of the research presented included topics as diverse as the effect of ‘Sexist humour on women’s perception of joke funniness’ (Manuela Thomae et al., University of Winchester), ‘The prevention and reversal of childhood learnt fear’ (Chris Askew et al., Kingston University), ‘The

conflicting nature of adult Autistic Spectrum Disorder diagnosis’ (Jennifer Mayer & Paul Dickerson, University of Roehampton), and ‘Leadership and deviance’ (Carola Leicht, University of Kent). The only difficulty attendees had was choosing which talks to attend!

The University of Kent was well represented at this event with Professor Dominic Abrams opening the conference with his keynote speech and a number of Kent academics and students showcasing their research through posters and talks. Other keynote speakers included Professors Hazel Rose Markus, Tania Zittoun, and Malinda Carpenter. The lunches provided a wonderful opportunity for networking and for delegates to meet all four keynote speakers during a lunchtime ‘meet the experts’ session, hosted by PsyPAG. The conference dinner provided a further opportunity to meet with academics and students alike, all whilst being serenaded by the evening’s jazz-swing entertainment performed by Paul Pashley.

Both Kiran Purewal and Chloe Tyler (University of Kent) were first-time presenters at this year's joint conference, and reflect on their experience as speakers and delegates.

Chloe: 'Having just completed an MSc in Group Processes and Intergroup Relations at University of Kent, I presented my findings on piloting a novel experiential mental health stigma-reduction approach. While I was nervous, my presentation was chaired well by Dr Keon West and the audience were sympathetic and understanding to the fact that it was my first time presenting at a British Psychological Society (BPS) conference. It was a valuable and worthwhile experience, and I received positive feedback and interest in my research. The conference was particularly valuable as the members present were in similar fields to my own research (i.e. forms of intergroup contact), providing the perfect opportunity to disseminate the novel area of research I focus on. I presented my research which examines experiential intergroup contact, this intervention simulates intergroup contact through role-playing characters of an outgroup. The questions I received were appreciated, and peers approached me following my presentation to discuss this new area of research in the field of intergroup contact. As a new postgraduate researcher, and a second time BPS conference attendee, I found the conference to be well prepared and the talks to be interesting and varied, especially thanks to the joint inclusion of both the social and developmental sections. I would very much enjoy returning next year when I have more findings from my first year researching as a PhD researcher!'

Kiran: 'As a social and developmental researcher I was excited to hear that both sections would be joining forces for this year's annual conference. Along with presenting a poster on influences on adoles-

cents' body satisfaction, I was honoured to be presenting my research on children's social inclusion intentions as part of Dr Nicola Abbott's (Canterbury Christ Church University) social exclusion symposium, with Professor Adam Rutland (Goldsmiths University) as discussant. I enjoyed presenting my research to a supportive and interactive audience, who were eager to learn more about our research. In addition to learning about some fantastic work over the course of three days, I thoroughly enjoyed the workshop on 'intergroup contact among children and young people'. This workshop provided a fast-paced overview and summary of the findings and research methods used in developmental intergroup contact experiments. In my opinion, the best part of this workshop was hearing from both experts and audience members on the directions that they would like to see intergroup contact take in future research and brainstorming creative and novel methods to further develop the theory. For me, the BPS Developmental and Social Annual Conference provided a lot of motivation for the second year of my PhD and inspired me to consider new approaches in my work on children and young people's prejudices. The #devsocconf Twitter-feed provides further evidence of just how brilliantly organised the event was and what an enjoyable time all delegates had!'

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Developmental Section Annual Conference 2016

14–16 September 2016, Hilton, Belfast

Conference Dinner to be held at Titanic Belfast on 15 September.

Keynotes and conference themes announced shortly.

Submissions open in November 2015.

www.bps.org.uk/dev2016

 #devconf

